

The  
Holy  
Grail

Jack Spicer

THE HOLY GRAIL

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# The Holy Grail

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# The Book of Gawain

**T**ony

To be casual and have the wish to heal

Gawain, I think,

Had that when he saw the sick king squirming around like a

half-cooked eel on a platter asking a riddle maybe only ghostmen

could answer

His riddled body. Heal it how?

Gawain no ghostman, guest who could not gather

Anything

There was an easy grail.

Later shot a green knight

In a dead forest

That was an easy answer

No king

No riddle.



In some kind of castle some kind of knight played chess  
with an invisible chessplayer

A maiden, naturally.

You can hear the sound of wood on the board and some  
kind of knight breathing

It was another spoiled quest. George

Said to me that the only thing he thought was important in  
chess was killing the other king. I had accused him of  
lack of imagination.

I talked of fun and imagination but I wondered about the  
nature of poetry since there was some kind of knight and an  
invisible chessplayer and they had been playing chess in  
the Grail Castle.

Everyone is impressed with courage and when he fought  
him he won

Who won?

I'm not sure but one was wearing red armor and one black armor

I'm not sure about the colors but they were looking for  
a cup or a poem

Everyone in each of the worlds is impressed with courage and

I'm not sure if either of them were human or that what they  
were looking for could be described as a cup or a poem or  
why either of them fought

They made a loud noise in the forest and the ravens gathered  
in trees and you were almost sure they were ravens.

On the sea

(There is never an ocean in all Grail legend)

There is a boat.

There is always one lone person on it sailing

Widershins.

His name is Kate or Bob or Mike or Dora and his sex is

almost as obscure as his history.

Yet he will be met by a ship of singing women who will embalm

him with nard and spice and all of the hallows

As the ocean

In the far distance.



They are still looking for it  
 Poetry and magic see the world from opposite ends  
 One cock-forward and the other ass-forward  
 All over Britain (But what a relief it would be to give all  
   this up and find surcease in somebodyelse's soul and  
   body)  
 Thus said Merlin  
 Unwillingly  
 Who saw through time.

Perverse  
 Turned against the light  
 The grail they said  
 Is achieved by steady compromise. An unending  
 The prize is there at the bottom of the rainbow – follow  
   the invisible markings processwise  
 I, Gawain, who am no longer human but a legend  
   followed the markings  
 Did  
 More or less what they asked  
 My name is now a symbol for shame  
 I, Gawain, who once was a knight of the Grail in a dark forest.

# The Book of Percival



**F**ool -

Killer lurks between the branches of every tree

Bird - language.

Fooled by nature, I

Accepted the quest gracefully

Played the fool. Fool -

Killer in the branches waiting.

Left home. Fool - killer left home too. Followed me.

Fool -

Killer thinks that just before the moment I will find the  
grail he will catch me. Poor

Little boy in the forest

Dancing.

Even the forest felt deserted when he left it. What nonsense!  
 The enormous trees. The lakes with carp in them. The wolves  
 and badgers. They  
 Should feel deserted for a punk kid who has left them?  
 Even the forest felt deserted. There were no leaves dropping  
 or sounds anybody could hear.  
 The wind met resistance but no noise, the sky  
 Could not be heard through the water.  
 Percival  
 Fool, like badger, pinetree, broken water,  
 Gone.

"Ship of fools," the wise man said to me.  
 "I used to work in Chicago in a department store," I said  
 to the wise man never knowing that there would be a ship  
 Whose tiny sails, grail bearing  
 Would have to support me  
 All the loves of my life  
 Each impossible choice I had been making. Wave  
 Upon wave.  
 "Fool," I could hear them shouting for we were becalmed  
 in some impossible harbor  
 The grail and me  
 And in impossible armor  
 The spooks that bent the ship  
 Forwards and backwards.



If someone doesn't fight me I'll have to wear this armor  
 All of my life. I look like the Tin Woodsman in the Oz Books.  
 Rusted beyond recognition.  
 I am, sir, a knight. Puzzled  
 By the way things go toward me and in back of me. And finally  
 into my mouth and head and red blood  
 O, damn these things that try to maim me  
 This armor  
 Fooled  
 Alive in its  
 Self.

The hermit said dance and I danced  
 I was always meeting hermits on the road  
 Who said what I was to do and I did it or got angry and didn't  
 Knowing always what was not expected of me.  
 She electrocuted herself with her own bathwater  
 I pulled the plug  
 And there was darkness (the Hermit said)  
 Deeper than any hallow.

It was not searching the grail or finding it that prompted me  
 It was playing the fool (Fool-killer along at my back  
 Playing the fool.)  
 I knew that the cup or the dish or the knights I fought didn't  
 have anything to do with it  
 Fool-killer and I were fishing in the same ocean  
 "And at the end of whose line?" I asked him once when I  
 met him in my shadow.  
 "You ask the wrong questions" and at that my shadow jumped  
 up and beat itself against a rock, "or rather the wrong  
 questions to the wrong person"  
 At the end of whose line  
 I now lie  
 Hanging.

No visible means of support  
 The Grail hung there like june-berries in October or something  
 I had felt and forgotten.  
 This was a palace and an ocean I was in  
 A ship that cast its water on the tide  
 A grail, a real grail. Snark-hungry.  
 The Grail hung there with the seagulls circling round it and the  
 pain of my existence soothed  
 "Fool," they sang in voices more like angels watching  
 "Fool."



# *The Book of Lancelot*

**T**ony (another Tony)

All the deer in all the forests of Britain could not pay for  
the price of this dish

Lancelot took a chance on this, heard the adulterous sparrows  
murmuring in the adulterous woods

Willing to pay the price of this with his son or his own body.

More simply, your heavy hands (and all the deer of Britain) a  
grail-searcher has need.



Walking on the beach and you both hear the sound the ocean makes.  
 The sailors at Tarawa, Java, burning oil at their backs  
 Swimming for dear life.  
 You say, and he says and meaningless says the beach's ocean  
 Grail at point 029.  
 In the slick of the thing music  
 Waves brushing past the beach as if they wanted to be human  
 The sailors screaming.  
 Walking on the beach, fondly or not fondly, they hear the sound the  
 Ocean makes.

Nobody's stranger than the stranger coming to the dinner  
 He can imitate anything or anybody.  
 "When they start climbing up the back of the old flash" the  
 runner who had simply hit a single almost had passed him  
 "It is time to quit. I'll never play again."  
 Almost saw the cup, Lancelot, his eyes so filled with tears.

Love cannot exist between people  
 Trial balloons. How fated the whole thing is.  
 It is as if there exists a large beach with no one on it.  
 Eaches calling each on the paths. Essentially ocean.  
 You do know Graham how I love you and you love me  
 But nothing can stop the roar of the tide. The grail  
 not there, becomes a light which is not able to be  
 there like a lighthouse or spindrift  
 No, Graham, neither of us can stop the pulse and  
 beat of it  
 The roar.

Lancelot fucked Gwenievere only four times.  
 He fucked Elaine twenty times  
 At least. She had a child and died from it.  
 Hero Lancelot feared the question "what is the holy grail?"  
 which nobody asked him.  
 All the snow on the mountain  
 It was  
 For a time  
 His question to answer.



The Irish have only invented three useful things:  
Boston, The Holy Grail, and fairies.

This is not to imply that Boston, The Holy Grail and  
fairies do not exist.

They do and are to be proved in time as much as the  
package of Lucky Strike cigarettes you smoke or the  
village your grandmother came from.

Jack, jokes aside, is very much like entering that forest  
Perilous

No place for Lancelot, who has killed more men  
Than you I -

Rish will ever see.

He has all the sense of fun of an orange, Gawain once  
explained to a trusted friend.

His sense of honor is too much barely to carry his body

The horse he rides on (Dada) will never go anywhere. Sharp,

in the palace, he wanders alone among intellectual servants

He sings a song to himself as he goes out to look for the thing.

The Grail will not be his

Obviously.

# The Book of Gwenivere



**L**ance, lets figure out where we stand  
On the beach of some inland sea which cannot be  
called an ocean  
The river in back of us is green.  
The river is wet. Down it floats what is not the grail-mistress,  
several magicians and dead seagulls. Harp  
On the same theme. Play the wild chorus over and over  
again – the music magic  
Lady of the Lake I hate you; cannot stand your casual  
Way the wind blows. Listen,  
I am Gwenivere.

The question is pretty simple. I would never have been  
 admitted to the Grail Castle but if I had been I would  
 have asked it: "Why  
 Did you admit me to the Grail Castle?" That would  
 have stopped him.  
 I am sick of the invisible world and all its efforts to be visible  
 What eyes  
 (Yours or mine)  
 Are worth seeing it  
 Or, Lance, what eyes (mine and yours) when, looking at each  
 other we forget the Grail Castle for a moment at least  
 Make it worth seeing it?

Good Friday now. They are saying mass in the Grail Castle  
 The dumb old king  
 Awaits  
 The scourge, the vinegar, the lance, for the umptiumpth time  
 Not Christ, but a substitute for Christ as Christ was a  
 substitute.  
 You knights go out to tear him from the cross like he was  
 a fairy princess turned into a toad  
 The cup that keeps the blood shed, bled into  
 Is a hoax, a hole  
 I see it dis -  
 Appear.

What you don't understand are depths and shadows  
 They grow, Lance, though the sun covers them in a single day.  
 Grails here, grails there, grails tomorrow  
 A trick of light.  
 A trick of light streaming from the cup  
 You say, knowing only the unbent rock  
 The shells  
 That have somehow survived their maker.  
 The depths and shadows are beside all of this, somehow  
 Returning  
 Each man to what of him is not bone and skin and mortal  
 The moon  
 Which is beautiful and shell of the earth  
 Streaming.

Sometimes I wonder what you are looking for. The Monday  
 After Christ died the women came to his tomb and the  
 angel said "What are you looking for?"  
 A sensible question.  
 The bloody lance that pierced his side, the scourge, the  
 vinegar had all turned into relics  
 Why beat a dead horse?  
 The women, who were no better than they should be, hadn't  
 seen him  
 If there really was a Christ only  
 This will happen in the Grail Castle



Boo! I tell you all  
 Scape-ghosts and half-ghosts  
 You do not know what is going to appear.  
 Is going to appear at the proper place like you, Lance  
 Salt Lake City, New York, Jerusalem, Hell, The Celestial City  
 Winking and changing like a light in some dark harbor. Damn  
 The ghosts of the unbent flame, the pixies, the kobalds, the  
 dwarves eating jewels underground, the lives that seem to  
 have nothing to do except to make you have  
 Adventures.  
 Naked  
 I lie in this bed. The spooks  
 Around me animate themselves.  
 Boo! Hello!  
 Lance, the cup is heavy. Drop the cup!

This teacup Christ bled into. You are so polite, Lance  
 All your heros are so polite  
 They would make a cat scream.  
 I dreamed last night that your body had become a gigantic  
 adventure. Wild horses  
 Could not tear it away from itself.  
 I  
 Was the whole earth you were traveling over  
 Rock, sand, and water.  
 Christ, and this little teacup  
 Were always between us.  
 I was a witch, Lance. My body was not the earth, yours  
 not wild horses or what wild horses could not tear  
 Politely, your body woke me up  
 And I saw the bent morning

*The Book of Merlin*

“Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200.00.”

The naked sound of a body sounds like a trumpet through all this horseshit.

You do not go to jail. You stay there unmoved at what any physical or metaphysical policemen do.

You behave like Gandhi. Your

Magic will be better than their magic. You await that time with hunger.

Strike

Against the real things. The colonial Hengest and Horsa  
The invasion of Britain was an invasion of the spirit.



Wohin auf das Auge blicket  
 Moor und Heide rings herum  
 Vogelsang uns nicht erquicket  
 Eichen stehen kahl und krumm.  
 Lost in the peril of their own adventure  
 Grail-searchers im Konzentrationslage  
 A Jew stole the grail the first time  
 And a Jew died into it  
 That is the history of Britain.  
 The politics of the world of spooks is as random as that of  
 a Mesopotamian kingdom  
 Merlin (who saw two ways at the least of the river, the bed  
 of the river.) Maer-  
 Chen ausgeschlossen.

The tower he built himself  
 From some kind of shell that came from his hide  
 He pretended that he was a radio station and listened to  
 grail-music all day and all night every day and every night.  
 Shut up there by a treachery that was not quite his own (he  
 could not remember whose treachery it was) he predicted the  
 future of Britain.  
 The land is hollow, he said, it consists of caves and holes so  
 immense that eagles or nightengales could not fly in them  
 Love,  
 The Grail, he said,  
 No matter what happened.

Otherwise everything was brilliant  
 Flags loose in the wind. A tournament  
 For live people. Disengagement as from the throat to the  
     loin or the sand to the ocean.  
 The flags  
 Of another country.  
 Flags hover in the breeze  
 Mary Baker Eddy alone in her attempt  
 To slake Thursdays. Sereda,  
 Oh, how chill the hill  
 Is with the snow on it  
 What a semblance of  
 Flags.

Then the thought of Merlin became more than imprisoned Merlin  
 A jail-castle  
 Was built on these grounds.  
 Sacco and Vanzetti and Lion-Hearted Richard and Dillinger who  
     somehow almost lost the Grail. Political prisoners  
 Political prisoners. Willing to rise from their graves.  
 "The enemy is in your own country," he wrote that when Gawain  
     and Percival and almost everybody else was stumbling around  
     after phantoms  
 There was a Grail but he did not know that  
 Jailed.

That's it Clyde, better hit the road farewell  
 That's it Clyde better hit the road  
 You're not a frog you're a horny toad. Goodbye, farewell, adios.  
 The beach reaching its ultimate instant. A path over the sand.  
 And the toadfrog growing enormous in the shadow of fogged-in  
 waters. The Lady of the Lakes. Monstrous.  
 This is not the end because like a distant bullet  
 A ship comes up. I don't see anybody on it. I am Merlin  
 imprisoned in a branch of the Grail Castle.

"Heimat du bist wieder mein"  
 Heimat. Heimat ohne Ferne  
 You are called to the phone.  
 You are called to the phone to predict what will happen to  
 Britain. The great silver towers she gave you. What you  
 are in among  
 You are called to predict the exact island that your ancestors  
 came from  
 Carefully now will there be a Grail or a Bomb which tears  
 the heart out of things?  
 I say there will be no fruit in Britain for seven years unless  
 something happens.



The Book of Galahad

Backyards and barnlots

If he only could have stopped talking for a minute he could  
have understood the prairies of American  
Whitman, I mean, not Galahad who were both born with the  
same message in their throats

Contemplating America from Long Island Sound or the Grail  
from purity is foolish, not in a bad sense but fool-ish as if  
words or poetry could save you.

The Indians who still walked around the Plains were dead and  
the Grail-searchers were dead and neither of them knew it.  
Innocent in the wind, the sound of a real bird's voice  
In-vented.

Galahad was invented by American spies. There is no  
reason to think he existed.

There are agents in the world to whom true and false are  
laughable. Galahad laughed

When he was born because his mother's womb had been so  
funny. He laughed at the feel of being a hero.

Pure. For as he laughed the flesh fell off him

And the Grail appeared before him like a flashlight.

Whatever was to be seen

Underneath.

"We're off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz,"  
Damned Austrailians marching into Greece on a fool's errand.

The cup said "Drink me" so we drank

Shrinking or rising in size depending how the bullets hit us  
Galahad had a clearer vision. Was an SS officer in that war

or a nervous officer (Albanian, say), trying to outline the  
cup through his glasses.

The Grail lives and hovers

Like bees

Around the camp and their love, their corpses. Honey-makers

Damned Austrailian marching into Greece on a fool's errand.



To drink that hard liquor from the cold bitter cup.  
 I'll tell you the story. Galahad, bastard son of Elaine  
 Was the only one allowed to find it. Found it in such a way  
 that the dead stayed dead, the waste land stayed a waste  
 land. There were no shoots from the briers or elm trees.  
 I'll teach you to love the Ranger Command  
 To hold a six-shooter and never to run  
 The brier and elm, not being human endure  
 The long walk down somebody's half-dream. Terrible.

Transformation then. Becoming not a fool of the grail like the  
 others were but an arrow, ground-fog that rose up and down  
 marshes, loosing whatever soul he had in the shadows  
 Tears of ivy. The whole lost land coming out to meet this soldier  
 Sole dier in a land of those who had to stay alive,  
 Cheat of dream  
 Monster  
 Casually, ghostlessly  
 Leaving the story  
 And the land was the same  
 The story the same  
 No hand  
 Creeping out of the shadows.

The Grail was merely a cannibal pot  
Where some were served and some were not  
This Galahad thinks.

The Grail was mainly the upper air  
Where men don't fuck and women don't stare  
This Galahad thinks.

The Grail's alive as a starling at dawn  
That shatters the earth with her noisy song  
This Galahad thinks.

But the Grail is there. Like a red balloon  
It carries him with it up past the moon  
Poor Galahad thinks.

Blood in the stars and food on the ground  
The only connection that ever was found  
Is what rich Galahad thinks.

The Grail is as common as rats or seaweed  
Not lost but misplaced.

Someone searching for a letter that he knows is around the house  
And finding it, no better for the letter.

The grail-country damp now from a heavy rain  
And growing pumpkins or artichokes or cabbage or whatever they  
used to grow before they started worrying about the weather.

Man

Has finally no place to go but upward: Galahad's  
Testament.

*The Book of the Death of Arthur*



**H**e who sells what isn't his  
Must pay it back or go to prison,"  
Jay Gould, Cornelius Vanderbilt, or some other imaginary  
American millionaire  
--Selling short.  
The heart  
Is short too  
Beats at one and a quarter beats a second or something  
like that. Fools everyone.  
I am king  
Of a grey city in the history books called Camelot  
The door, by no human hand,  
Open.

Marilyn Monroe being attacked by a bottle of sleeping pills  
 Like a bottle of angry hornets  
 Lance me, she said  
 Lance her, I did  
 I don't work there anymore.  
 The answer-question always the same. I cannot remember  
 when I was not a king. The sword in the rock is like a  
 children's story told by my mother.  
 He took her life. And when she floated in on the barge or  
 joined the nunnery or appeared dead in all the newspapers  
 it was his shame not mine  
 I was king.

In the episode of le damoiselle cacheresse, for example, one stag,  
 one brachet, and one fay, all of which properly belong together  
 as the essentials for the adventures of a single hero, by a  
 judicious arrangement supply three knights with difficult tasks,  
 and the maiden herself wanders off with a different lover.  
 So here, by means of one hunt and one fairy ship, three heros are  
 transported to three different places. When they awake the  
 magic ship has vanished and sorry adventures await them all.  
 Not one of them is borne by the boat, as we should naturally  
 expect, to the love of a fay. ....  
 Plainly we are dealing with materials distorted from their original  
 form.

The faint call of drums, the little signals  
 Folks half-true and half-false in a different way than we are  
     half-true and half-false  
 A meal for us there lasts a century.  
 Out to greet me. I, Arthur  
 Rex quondam et futurus with a banjo on my knee.  
 I, Arthur, shouting to my bastard son "It is me you are trying  
     to murder!"  
 Listening to them, they who have problems too  
 The faint call of           them.  
 (They would stay in Camelot for a hundred years)   The faint call of  
 Me.   The faint call of

I have forgotten why the grail was important  
 Why somebody wants to reach it like a window  
 You throw open. Thrown open  
 What would it mean? What knight would fight the gorms and  
     cobblies to touch it?  
 I can remember a lot about the kingdom. The peace I was going  
     to establish. The wrong notes, the wrong notes, Merlin told me,  
     were going to kill me.  
 Dead on arrival. Avalon has  
 Supermarkets - where the dead trade bones with the dead. Where  
     the heros  
 Asking nothing



A noise in the head of the prince. A noise that travels  
a long ways

Past chances, broken pieces of lumber,

"Time future," the golden head said,

"Time present. Time past."

And the slumbering apprentice never dared  
to tell the master. A noise.

It annoys me to look at this country. Dead  
branches. Leaves unable even to grimly seize  
their rightful place in the tree of the heart

Annoys me

Arthur, king and future king

A noise in the head of the prince. Something  
in God-language. In spite of all this  
horseshit, this uncomfortable music.



